

THIRTY-NINTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MINISTRY-AT-LARGE,

IN LOWELL, MASS.,

FOR THE YEAR 1883.

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*READ APRIL 6, 1884.*

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LOWELL, MASS.:

CAMPBELL & HANSCOM, PRINTERS.

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# ANNUAL REPORT

## OF THE

### MINISTRY-AT-LARGE IN LOWELL.

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BY REV. H. C. DUGANNE.

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#### STATISTICS.

During the year 1883 we received 1,873 applications for aid in some form, of which 262 were for work, and 1,611 for relief in distress. The latter represented 420 cases,—369 families and 51 single persons,—and about 1,500 individuals. Of the families, 262 were relieved and 107 were not. Of the single persons, 22 were aided and 28 refused. In all, 285 were aided, and 135 refused. Apart from the aid given those seeking employment, about 1,000 persons were relieved. Of the 420 cases, 131 were American, and 289 foreign, of which latter 147 were Irish, 57 English, 37 French, 34 Scotch, and 14 Provincial, and others. As to families, 192 were married, 96 widows, 66 deserted wives, 15 widowers, and 51 single men and women.

Of the 371 cases recorded in 1882, 108 applied again this year, while 312 were new cases. Thus it appears that 263 applicants of the preceding year have become self-supporting, or for some other reason have ceased to call for aid, at least from us. This is very gratifying, as it shows how largely this charity fulfils its

original design as a temporary relief, "to bridge over a hard spot," and not as a continuous support.

We expended in relief \$2,774.04,—\$1,508.71 from the income of the Nesmith fund, \$588.99 from the Tyler Fund, and \$676.34 from the receipts of the Ministry-at-Large, including the "specials." This gives an average of \$6.60 to an applicant, or about \$9.75 to a family actually relieved. The amount is small, but it is often of great value to those receiving it. If it is sufficient to supply the missing round in the ladder, and enables him who is at the foot to ascend, it is as good and perhaps better, than larger sums, which could do no more. Or if it furnish the plank to complete the bridge over the hard spot, it is enough. Besides these cash expenditures, 1,611 garments have been distributed, and a sewing school has been maintained, affording instruction in the use of the needle to 86 pupils.

#### THE LABOR REQUIRED IN ALMSGIVING.

Religious services have been continued, as usual, with a somewhat increased interest, since the summer vacation. The temperance meetings on Wednesday evening, and the Sunday School, have also shared in the revival of interest felt elsewhere. The latter, though not numbering upon its annual roll as many names as in some former years, maintains, I think, a better average than when its list for the whole year was longest. It now numbers two hundred and thirty-five scholars, entered during the year, and nineteen officers and teachers,—the latter an earnest corps of volunteers from six or seven different churches. I regret exceedingly not to be able to devote more time and attention to this branch of our work, as it is

greatly needed and is very rewarding. But the demand upon our time in the field of charitable labor is so great that we have but little time left for anything else. It is, indeed, an easy matter to give away three or four thousand dollars; but to give it to four or five hundred applicants so as to do the most good and the least harm, is quite another thing. It is the planning, the devising, and the personal effort needed to go with every dollar given away, that costs in both time and strength. We can have no specifics labeled and numbered, as in certain schools of medicine, of sure and unvarying action on this or that applicant; but each case must be studied by itself, and the treatment varied according to the peculiarities of each. The disposition, habits, temperament, condition, and abilities of each must be considered, and that kind and amount of relief given which is best adapted to secure the ultimate good of each. Two or three dollars, with an equal value in time or personal interest, may be all that is required in one case, while in another ten or twenty dollars would be necessary to accomplish the same result.

Dr. Putnam is quite right when he says, "It is futile to try to give suitable and adequate aid without a knowledge of the real needs of the case, and worse than useless to give aid that is not suitable and adequate, unless it be merely to prevent immediate suffering while we are finding out the real needs." By adequate help is meant sufficient to accomplish the purpose for which it is given, that is, to place the applicant again in a position to become self-sustaining. To stop half way would be to waste our charity. A bridge that ends in the middle of a stream is no better for the matter of crossing than no bridge at all.



To give to each applicant a dollar or five dollars alike is an easy way to disburse alms, but it is also very wasteful. An old rule was to give little, but give often, that the recipient might be induced to practice economy. But experience has shown this system to be exceedingly demoralizing. Except in cases where help must obviously be continued through a long period, "adequate" aid should be given as promptly as possible, and then discontinued. But to ascertain all these conditions takes time.

A recent writer complains of the Associated Charities, that so much is paid in salaries, and so little given in charity. He recognizes the advantage to the public of the weeding out of impostors and the unworthy, but still laments the loss to charity in the salaries paid to its agents; but he overlooks, with a thousand others, the most important and valuable factor in charity, namely, that which is given in time, in personal effort and influence. There are many whose names do not appear at all upon the list of beneficiaries, who by means of personal interest and effort have been more substantially aided than they could have been by any number of orders for flour and pork. Take a single illustration: A man coming to this city, fell into need, and applied to a countryman of his, who gave him a dollar. Another man hearing of him, sought him out and secured for him a situation worth five dollars a day. Which of these two gave to the stranger the most valuable charity, he who gave money or he who gave time? The latter, we say, of course. But time must be paid for, like other commodities, and this purchase money we call a salary. When we buy food or fuel for the poor, we call that charity. Why not charity when we buy time or service for them? It is



a mistake to consider a conscientious agent of relief simply a detective or a dispenser of alms. He is this, but a great deal more. He is a friend, adviser, and confidant of the poor, giving time, and thought, and counsel in all their straits and sorrows. These items cannot be tabulated and presented thus and thus in a report, but they are, after all, our best charities, because most private and most helpful. The \$2,800 given by the Ministry-at-Large last year, were but a limited charity if this were all that was done. It is as true to-day as it was two thousand years ago, "that man shall not live by bread alone."

#### PAUPERISM IN LOWELL.

There is certainly great need to study carefully our systems of charity and their effects, and devise such methods as stimulate the spirit of self-reliance and personal endeavor; otherwise we shall find ourselves creating more destitution than we relieve. The tendency of all relief is strongly in this direction, unless prevented by all the checks and balances at our command. I have no doubt that you will be a little surprised to learn that even in our own favored city nearly if not quite one family in ten has been an applicant for charity during the year. And yet such is the fact. There are 9,009 houses in the city, and probably about 14,000 or 15,000 families. The city has given aid to 974 families, including state cases. The Ministry-at-Large has recorded 420 cases, and 320 soldiers, mostly with families, are in receipt of pensions or state aid. Of these, about 75 are single persons and 100 may be duplicated. This gives us 1,539, or, in round numbers, say 1,500 families asking relief outside the almshouse and the several "Homes" and institutions

of the city. This does not include those families aided by the Grand Army of the Republic, not otherwise helped, nor by the Young Men's Christian Association, and the several churches dispensing relief, from which we have no returns.

It is estimated that there are 70,000 inhabitants in the city, which would give us 14,000 families, at an average of five in a family. Actual families do not average this,—those aided averaging only three and a fraction. But there are more than 10,000 people in Lowell not included in families,—operatives and laborers accommodated in our large and numerous boarding houses,—therefore an average of five to a family is not an unreasonable estimate.

Perhaps, however, a fairer estimate of the percentage of those asking and receiving aid, would be to reckon it upon the individuals. This will give a more favorable showing, as very few of the 10,000 or 15,000 boarders and lodgers ever apply for aid, only fifty-one being received at our office during the year. The city aided 3,006 persons, or about 42.9 per thousand, equal to one in 23.2; state aid is furnished to about 900, and the Ministry-at-Large has relieved over 1,000. Suppose all others relieved 100 persons, not elsewhere included, and we have 5,006 persons in the receipt of charity. Not more than two or three hundred of these are duplications, at the outside; but granting that 500 are such, and we still have 4,500 persons receiving charity in Lowell, or 64.5 to the thousand, equal to about one in 15.5 persons.

#### LOWELL AND BOSTON COMPARED.

According to the best information I have been able to obtain, the municipality of Boston gave relief last



year to 12,706 persons, or about 28.6 to the thousand, equal to about one in 34.9 of the inhabitants, against 42.9 to the thousand by our city, or one in 23.2, as compared with one in 34.9. But the city of Boston abounds in voluntary sources of relief, of which four of the most prominent gave aid to over 23,000 persons last year; to which, if we add those in receipt of state aid,\* we shall have about 28,000 persons, or 63 to the thousand, in receipt of aid outside the city relief, from these five agencies alone. There is doubtless, however, a good deal of overlapping in many of these cases, which, if ascertained, would largely reduce these figures. The Associated Charities report 8,750 families registered at the central office as asking relief, of which about 8,100 received help. If we estimate three to a family, we have 24,300 persons, or 54.8 to the thousand. If all those aided were reported, the average would probably be from 60 to 65 persons in the thousand of the inhabitants, or not far from the percentage in Lowell. It will be seen, however, that in the item of municipal relief, where we have, not estimates, but exact figures, the number aided per thousand in Lowell exceeds that of Boston by 14.3, or fifty per cent, provided the estimated population of Boston — namely, 444,000 — is not too high.

#### THOUGHT REQUIRED.

These figures may well make us pause and enquire where this is to end. It would seem that this ought not so to be. Something is wrong somewhere to produce 4,500 persons in a city like this, asking, much less

\* One thousand four hundred and fifty soldiers and two hundred and fifty widows are reported as receiving state aid, which, with their families, would make about five thousand persons.



receiving, charitable relief, in fairly prosperous times; and means should be found to check it if possible. Of course a manufacturing centre brings together a great many poor people who may need help only once or twice in starting, and who are by no means paupers; but the 1,200 and over families relieved by the city and by state aid, with a few honorable exceptions, do not belong to this reputable class. These are veritable paupers, many of whom squander their earnings, when they work, for beer, knowing that they will be provided for by the city or by charity when work becomes slack. They expect it as confidently as the workman expects his pay, and base their calculations for the winter upon it.

Now suppose our "city fathers" should send out six hundred circulars on the first day of May, to 600 of the 974 families in receipt of aid, informing them that from the first day of June all relief should be absolutely and permanently discontinued, and under no circumstances renewed outside the almshouse, very few indeed would really suffer, and fewer still would have need to accept the provisions of the poor-farm, judging from the experience of other cities which have adopted this policy, but without the previous notice. The earnings of summer, which go into the beer drawer, will be reserved for the coal bin and flour barrel.

I do not intend in this to criticise the methods of the overseers of the poor, but what I do want to say is this, that in view of these facts we need to bring our very best thought to the subject, that we may know not only the present, but if possible, the future effect of our policy. Are we doing the best and all we can to repress this ever increasing evil? If not, what more can be done? These are questions we should ask

ourselves, not only as philanthropists, but as citizens and statesmen. No one has a moral right to contribute to a system that inflicts an evil upon society, when that can be avoided. Therefore the giving of alms wisely and well, either public or private, is by no means the easy matter we sometimes think it. Thought is just as requisite here as in the running of a mill or the operating of a railroad. The service does not always get it, I admit. The compensation offered is rarely such as to secure the required talent; but it needs it, nevertheless, and those who assume its responsibilities, whether paid for it or not, should give it their best thought and endeavor.

#### HOW TO CHECK PAUPERISM.

There are two ways of checking the growth of pauperism, namely, by repression on the one hand and by prevention on the other. The first is to pauperism what prohibition is to intemperance. By making charity difficult to obtain by those who are liable to abuse it or become pauperized by it, we place the temptation out of their reach, and force them into channels of legitimate self-support, and thus suppress the growth of the evil from without. This is one thing the Associated Charities of our different cities propose to do, on account of which they have been subjected to many adverse criticisms by those of tender sensibilities, who believe that the ways of charity should be made easy to such as may choose to avail themselves of it. But it is essential and exceedingly necessary, if we would restrict the evil even to its present limits. It is mockery to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," and then to scatter temptations all along the way of the weakest of our brethren. There



are temptations enough strewn in the way of life without adding to them in the name of law or of love. It may seem like benevolence to give a man half a meal when he is hungry, but it is a greater benevolence to leave him to earn a full meal by his own endeavor, when he can do it. There are those, indeed, to whom charity is always difficult, without being made so; but not to the mass of those who seek it. To them it must be made hard, if the disposition to seek it is to be restrained.

But this, after all, is but one method which, though the readiest, is not the completest. It is the lotion to apply to the ulcer, but not the alterative to physic the blood. External remedies are essential, but the internal are more essential. He is but a bungling physician who treats only the symptom, in his ignorance of the disease. Pauperism, intemperance, and kindred evils, are but the breaking out upon the surface of a hidden disease within. It is to the study of this we should direct our attention, and by the application of the proper remedies remove the root of the evil, and prevent the breaking out which we so much dread.

I observe three things which occasion or accompany destitution: —

1. The accidents of life, such as sickness and death.
2. The want of employment.
3. Dense ignorance.

I do not forget intemperance as a direct cause of four-fifths of all the destitution we are called upon to relieve, but this is largely included under the third head, namely, ignorance.

The first cannot be avoided, and will always afford an opportunity for the exercise of real and true charity, and keep alive its beautiful spirit in our hearts.



## CAUSE OF WANT OF EMPLOYMENT.

The second, want of employment, demands our attention. Every few years we find ourselves coming upon dull times, and hundreds of men and women willing to work find themselves out of employment. Yet it is evident there is no such thing absolutely as a "want of employment." There is always work enough for everybody somewhere in the world. There are prairies to break, forests to clear, hills to dig down, and valleys to fill up, streets to improve, and houses to beautify, comforts and conveniences to be sought everywhere and secured by labor, if we are prepared to engage in it. The trouble is not want of employment, but want of employment within our reach that we are able to do. The demand for labor is constantly shifting, with the changes and fashions of the times. A railway, for example, is needed in a certain locality, and its construction is ordered. Forthwith a demand for labor with pick and shovel springs up in that place, and workmen congregate by the hundreds. By and by the road is completed, and these men have no more work in this locality in the same line. They must seek other employment, or go elsewhere. If there is another road in construction within reach, they are all right. If not, and they know nothing but their pick and shovel, they come to want. So of almost all kinds of manufacturing. When this or that branch is good, high wages attract a large amount of help. By and by the market is supplied, perhaps glutted, and work becomes slack in that department, and the poorer help is discharged. These being unskilled in all other kinds of work, find themselves out of employment, and in a few weeks applying for charity.

The remedy is this: Educate the boys and girls to know and be able to do more than one thing. Teach them to bring thought to their work, and so be able to turn their hands with ease from one thing to another, with commendable if not with equal skill, and in emergencies to work for what their labor will command, but *work*. Then, if one industry fails, another very likely will be open to them.

I knew a merchant in New York who failed in business at the close of the war, and became really poor. He was married to a lady of culture, and had one child. Taking his little family with him, he went into the country, hired a small cottage, and went to work. The first day's work he did was to carry the hod, and he did it well. I need not say he did not remain a hod-carrier. His energy and willingness to do whatsoever his hands found to do, and to do it well, soon opened up to him wider fields and more lucrative employment. Not many broken merchants, or even clerks out of a situation in New York, would have taken the first offer of a job at the mortar-bed. They would have hung around their relatives and friends, and grown seedy, like Micawber, waiting for something "to turn up," and finally have been obliged to apply for charity.

I find that those who are capable of doing more than one thing are seldom long without something to do. It is convenient to have more than one trade, but this is not really necessary. If the few underlying principles of all mechanics and all labor be taught the youth, with the knowledge how to apply these principles when occasion requires, they will find the field of their capabilities greatly enlarged, and their means of obtaining a livelihood increased in proportion. The



changes, therefore, of industries which are continually occurring, will find the laborer prepared for them. Above all, I would have the leading principles of agriculture taught in all our public schools, that the attention of the boys might be turned in the direction of the farm, and as many inclined that way as possible.

It is, perhaps, the one great fault of our common schools that they tend rather to educate the youth *out* of work than *into* work. It is not the fault of learning, but the false idea that goes with it, that boys go to school to learn how to live without work, rather than how to live by work. If the mind of the young were more diligently impressed with the dignity of labor and the mechanical and economic laws governing it, in our public schools, they might graduate fewer lawyers, doctors, ministers, but a larger class of intelligent workmen.

#### EDUCATION THE GREAT REMEDY.

And this brings us to the third proposition, that destitution goes with ignorance. Faulty as our school system may be, as it respects a practical education, very few who have enjoyed its full privileges are among those asking relief. We have had all classes, educated and uneducated, professional and non-professional, apply for charity, but the former are the exceptions, the latter the rule. Comparatively few possessed of a fair common school education are obliged to seek charity. A trained intellect enables its possessor to perform his labor with judgment and skill, which render his services valuable. It is said that Amos Lawrence, I think it was, remarked that it would pay him to educate all his operatives, if he could only retain them in his mill after they were educated.



It would pay him in the superior quality and amount of work they would be able to do.

There is no kind of work which may not be done better and with greater ease, other things being equal, by a person trained to thought, than by an ignorant human animal that sleeps when he is awake. An employer once said to me that he preferred a certain class of foreign help noted for their ignorance, because if he had a heavy stick or stone to move, five or six men would seize it and carry it off without a murmur, whereas the more intelligent Americans would object. Very true. But the intelligent American would find a way to move it without all that outlay of muscular force. He would do by his brain what the other would do by his muscle. Nevertheless I think the intelligent American who is recognized by his employer as an intelligent being like himself, is quite as ready to put his shoulder to that which is really necessary as any other; and when he does it, he lifts in the right direction and at the proper time.

We are not here speaking of the higher education of the college, but of that which is obtained in our common schools. But even the higher education does not necessarily unfit one for manual labor. In the long application of the mind to subjects of abstract thought the hand may forget its cunning; but it is not the learning that occasions the loss, but the neglect of the hand. If it were the fashion to erect work-shops upon our college grounds, instead of gymnasiums, the young men in developing their muscles might also acquire a skill of hand more honorable than boxing and more useful than rowing. I have known college bred men to don the blue drilling in a new settlement, and dig in the ditch, chop in the forest, plant in the

field, build in the town, and trade in the market, and in the evening go to the club and discuss science, and nobody thought it unfitting.

All our charitable institutions and relief agencies, indispensable as they are, deal only with the branches of the evil of general indigence. The root is in the ignorance of the people. Close our ports against the ignorance of Europe, and look well to our public schools, and we should reduce pauperism in this country to a minimum. Few of our paupers are native born, and few come from those countries of Europe where a popular education is afforded. The Germans of the West, and the Scandinavians of the Northwest are said to be among the most industrious of our people, while the emigrants from Ireland and Italy are, with honorable exceptions, among the most thriftless. Germany promotes education; Ireland and Italy neglect it.

An intelligent young lady of Irish birth asked me not long since, in regard to this matter, what class I found most given to improvidence and consequent destitution; and answering, "The Irish," she replied, "I thought so." To my inquiry as to why it was so, she replied, "Ignorance and rum." I inquired to know if their religion might not have something to do with it, by relieving the laymen of the responsibility of personal and independent thought in all matters of faith and morals, thereby inducing the spirit of reliance upon another, which, carried into life, made it easy to look to others to supply those things which they neglected to provide for themselves. She, of course, thought not, believing that ignorance and rum were responsible for the pauperization of the Irish. And, indeed, she is quite right; but to what extent a system



of religion may be responsible for ignorance, and ignorance for intemperance, remains a question. All classes afford deplorable examples of intemperance, but it is among the illiterate that it reaches its lowest depths and attains its widest proportions. Very few, I imagine, who tap at the door of city relief could with their own hand, sign a temperance pledge, and fewer still would be willing to do it if they could.

If ignorance does not cause intemperance, it leaves the ignorant exposed to it by dwarfing his manhood, and predisposed to it by the lack of the higher forms of entertainment, and the occupancy of his mind at home with the papers of the day and books of interest and profit. I believe our best temperance work will begin here, with the children of the ignorant masses which drift upon our shores. Not that we should leave the other undone, but in our anxiety for the present we should look well to the foundations laid for the future.

But if ignorance predisposes to intemperance, it also leads to subserviency, and subserviency perpetuates ignorance. It is the policy of the master to keep the servant in ignorance, for only thus can he retain his authority. During the days of slavery, severe laws were maintained upon the statute books of the Southern states, making it a crime punishable by imprisonment to teach a slave to read. It was thought that the Blacks could not be held in subordination if they were educated; and no more could they. Just in proportion as men become intelligent they become free, and in proportion as they become free they become self-reliant,—self-reliant in religion, self-reliant in politics, self-reliant in the means of living. Any system of religion or state-craft which teaches or fosters



the spirit of reliance on another for that which we are able to obtain for ourselves, is a system of pauperization. I do not forget that we are, within certain limits, created dependent on each other; but within certain other limits we are made to go upon our own feet, and any attempt to frustrate this divine law will result in discomfiture and disappointment.

To check pauperism effectually, then, we must go to the root of the evil and eradicate it. Educate and elevate the people, enlarge the field of their capabilities, and then leave them very largely to fight out life's battles for themselves, and be content with the harvest of their own gathering. It is better so. It is the divine law, whether as expressed by Paul, "If any would not work, neither should he eat," or by Darwin in his principle of "the survival of the fittest."

Education is indeed sure to create many wants of which the laborer in his lowest estate is wholly unconscious, and make poverty harder to bear by revealing its privations. But because harder to bear, the effort to banish poverty will be greater. A closer application to work will be induced to supply the new demand of an improved taste, and higher wages will be sought and obtained without combinations and strikes, for wages have always advanced with advancing civilization. The organs, pianos, chromos, and handsome furniture, by no means uncommon in the houses of the operatives of our city, were things quite unknown and impossible a few years ago. Improved taste created the demand, and the demand found the means of supply. Nor is this to be regretted, even by the employer; for the multiplying of wants by culture insures an increase of demand for the goods manufactured—the products of labor—and larger sales bring larger

profits, and handsome profits insure higher wages and plenty of work. And so all are benefited.

This work of general elevation has much to contend with, and must of necessity be slow; but if we grow not "weary in well-doing," "in due season we shall reap if we faint not."





